

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF EDUCATION.

HOME ECONOMICS TEACHING IN SMALL
HIGH SCHOOLS.¹

The teaching of home economics in the smaller high schools in which only one or two special teachers of the subject are employed presents problems requiring special consideration. The United States Bureau of Education more than a year ago undertook a study of these problems, and through communication with hundreds of home economics teachers in smaller cities and villages has secured statements expressing their ideals, and giving courses of study that have been worked out, methods by which the needs of the communities have been met, and special features introduced into the school courses. A summary of the reports received may be regarded as representing the present-day tendencies in home economics teaching in the smaller high schools.

IDEALS OF HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS.

Fundamental to the successful teaching of home economics (as of all other subjects) is the conception and maintenance of a definite ideal. Whether this ideal be vaguely defined as the desire "to better living conditions" or be expressed in terms to specify the practical activities in which the girls are to be trained (for example, cooking, sewing, and the care of the home), a clear statement of what the teacher wishes to accomplish will provide her with a valuable means of checking up the adequacy of her courses and will guide her in determining the value of any given subject. "Will this course be an aid, in any way, to better living?" "Is this lesson essential to a better understanding of home conditions?" "Will the girl be a better home-maker if she pursues this course?" Questions of this sort should be constantly in the mind of the home economics teacher and should be frankly met, that the time of her students be not sacrificed to that which is without value in the school curriculum.

¹ This circular covers the topics treated in Home Economics Letters 14-18, inclusive, which are no longer available for distribution.

The expressed ideals of teachers in the actual service give promise of the ultimate results of home economics teaching in the schools.

Realizing that the purpose of teaching home economics in the high school is to place the girls who study it in a position to properly adjust themselves to their environment by giving, as a sound foundation, the principles which underlie the building of the home to-day and by awakening a sense of responsibility in the life of the community, courses are planned to create a practical interest in the activities of the home and to make the girls more efficient in the duties of the housekeeper and better able to cope with the problems of life.

Well-planned courses are designed to train in habits of cleanliness, order, and methodical work; to give a knowledge of the needs of the body and how best to supply these needs; and to develop the ability to plan, calculate costs, prepare, and serve a meal, and to buy, make, and care for clothing and all household furnishings.

Home economics courses are being so taught as to emphasize the importance and dignity of home making; to arouse a scientific interest in the problems of housekeeping, sanitation, and hygiene; to raise the standard of home making by providing ideals of beauty and intelligent workmanship; and to establish closer relations between the school and the home. Thus girls are enabled to accomplish the most in their student life; to administer a home efficiently, economically, and artistically; and to be of service to society.

COURSES OF STUDY.

The time allotment for home economics courses in smaller high schools ranges from two periods once a week for one year to two periods a day for four years. In the briefer course, only a general study can be made of foods and clothing. The longer course makes possible thorough training in all branches of home economics. In the majority of smaller high schools the courses are limited to two years, five double periods a week, or the equivalent of two periods a day for two years. Uniformity in the length of periods has not yet been secured, but it is advisable to have periods of from 90 minutes to 2 hours for all laboratory work. In periods less than 90 minutes in length many cooking processes can not be carried to completion, and the routine work of taking out and putting away supplies will be multiplied in sewing classes. When laboratory periods are short, class presentation of subject matter is frequently neglected, and much opportunity for thorough instruction is lost.

The outlines for clothing, household management, and foods and cookery which follow suggest the field that is usually covered in a four-year high-school course. The work outlined for the first year in sewing and the first year in cooking is fundamental, and in itself offers a good course if the time is limited to two years.

COURSE OF STUDY.

CLOTHING.

First year high school.—One double period daily for the year.

I. Textile study.

- a. Cotton.
- b. Flax.
- c. Wool.
- d. Silk.
- e. History of weaving and spinning.
- f. Tests of fibers for adulterations, etc.
- g. Making of textile charts.

II. Clothing study.

- a. Choice of material for undergarments.
- b. Patterns—commercial and drafted.
- c. Construction of undergarments.
- d. Suitable finish for garments.
- e. Hygiene of clothing.
- f. Economics of dress—yearly clothing budget.
- g. Ethics of shopping.
- h. Care and repair of clothing.

III. Practical work—Sewing.

- a. Simple stitches and their special uses; patching and darning as needed.
- b. Sewing bag, with fundamental stitches.
- c. Sewing apron or corset cover by hand (with embroidery stitches.)
- d. Use and care of a sewing machine and its attachments.
- e. Night gown or petticoat, with machine.
- f. Kimono, middie, or simple wash dress.
- g. Shirt, princess slip, or wool skirt.
- h. Preparation of household linen and fittings.
- i. Laundering of household and personal fabrics.

Third year high school.—One double period daily for half a year.

I. Advanced textile study.

II. History of costume—costume design.

III. Drafting, selection, and use of patterns (advanced).

IV. Practical work.

- a. Advanced garment making.
- b. Remodeling garments.
- c. Simple tailoring.
- d. Millinery.

HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT.

Third year high school.—One double period daily for half a year.

Fourth year high school.—One double period daily for half a year.

I. The house—its construction, fittings (for light, heat, ventilation, water supply, and removal of waste), decorations, furnishing, sanitation, and care.

II. Expenditures for housekeeping.

- a. Division of the income.
- b. The family budget.
- c. Household accounts.

III. Marketing.

IV. Laundering.

V. Domestic service.

FOODS AND COOKING.

Second year high school.—One double period daily for the year.

I. Food study.

- a. Classes of foods—their source, nature, and value.
- b. Care of food in the home.
- c. Effect of cooking on the different classes of foods.
- d. Digestion of foods.
- e. Cost of foods.
- f. Marketing.
- g. Food combinations for meal service.
- h. Well-planned meals—breakfast, dinner, lunch, and supper.
- i. Making of dietaries.

II. Table service.

- a. Setting the table.
- b. Waiting on table.
- c. Table etiquette.

III. Practical work—cooking.

- a. Choice, use, and cost of fuels.
- b. Methods of cooking—baking, boiling, steaming, frying, canning, preserving, etc.
- c. Cooking of starches, sugars, fats, and proteins (fresh green vegetables, starchy vegetables, cereals, fruit, eggs, milk, cheese, meats, fish, poultry, batters, doughs, salads, simple desserts, and beverages).
- d. Preservation of foods—canning, preserving, and drying.

Fourth year high school.—One double period daily for the half year.

Advanced cooking, continuation of the previous course in cookery, leading on to analysis of recipes, lunchroom cookery, etc.

Dietetics.

Invalid cooking.

Home nursing.

THE MEAL PLAN.

In an effort to meet the objection that the lessons given in the cooking classes have not been used in home practice, many teachers have adopted what is called "the meal plan." The course begins with a study of the breakfast, taking each course separately and giving consideration to food values, menus, and marketing. The first lessons are on fruit, their preservation, and ways of serving. Then follow cereals, eggs, beverages, meats and substitutes for meat, and breakfast breads, with lessons on table service. After a few serving lessons, the class cooks and serves an entire breakfast. If the class is large, one section serves another section. Groups of guests, teachers, school officials, or fathers and mothers of the students are invited to the breakfasts. Luncheons, dinners, and suppers are studied, prepared, and served in the same way. As the girls are given the responsibility of buying the foods used, they become acquainted with prices of foods and cost of recipes, as well as with the proper combinations.

SCHOOL LUNCHES.

To a considerable extent home economics teachers are feeling responsibility for the physical welfare of the pupils. School lunches are frequently served, that the children who bring cold lunches to school may have some warm dish that will insure better health. A nominal sum is usually charged for cost of materials, and children are encouraged to bring produce from home that may be utilized for the lunches. This makes possible the experience of cooking and serving foods in larger amounts, the study of cost of foods in relation to their weight and to the number served, and the keeping of accounts. Meats, which are too expensive to purchase for a small class, can be utilized when their sale in the school lunch will help pay for the expense of their purchase.

The following interesting account of a simple cafeteria offers valuable suggestions as to correlation of work.

Our cafeteria equipment cost \$86. We have nickel, silver, and semiporcelain dishes for 100. Our utensils are very meager and simple—two large double boilers, two big copper bottom boilers, four baking dishes, two mixing bowls, sharp knives, a good bread board, egg beaters, and measuring cups. We use the physiography laboratory, which is fitted up with stationary zinc-top tables and sink. A \$65 coal range was installed for our work.

At serving time a commercial student takes the cash, looks after the banking, and keeps the books, in return for which she receives her food. Two other girls help serve, and one is check girl. These students also get their meals. We sell all soups (a large bowl) for 5 cents, bread and butter 2 cents, chocolate 3 cents, baked potato 5 cents, scalloped dishes 5 cents, baked beans 5 cents, and all desserts 5 cents. We pay a woman \$25 a month to help with the rougher portion of the work of cooking and to wash the dishes. Two gallons of milk are used every day, and many apples and vegetables. We buy vegetables in large quantities and bury them in the garden. They keep splendidly and are so much cheaper. We feed 40 students on the average, but in cold months the number runs up to nearly 100 a day. There is also a class in catering after school. These nine girls go into the homes to prepare and serve lunches, dinners, etc. They are paid 25 cents an hour. This helps the girls to pay their way through high school.

METHODS OF CONDUCTING COURSES.

In most high schools cooking apparatus and materials are furnished by the school board, but the pupils supply their own materials for sewing. Textbooks are beginning to be commonly used for the lessons in sewing, cooking, and household management. However, lessons are not confined to those contained in the textbooks. Use is made of the publications of the Department of Agriculture and of all other bulletins and reference books that the school is able to provide. Class visits are made to bakeries, creameries, markets, stores, and factories. Business and professional men are invited to give talks to the girls on subjects related to the courses. These

visits and talks are made the basis for discussions on pure food, clean milk, garbage disposal, full weights, etc. White lists are prepared, naming those stores and markets that are well conducted. Cooperation with the city hospital makes possible the use of its bedrooms for giving lessons on home care of the sick, and a nurse is often secured from the hospital or from the city board of health to give talks to the girls.

The care of the baby is often taken up if the course of study is of sufficient length; lessons are given in the symptoms and treatment of the common diseases, and a short time is spent in invalid cookery.

A few schools have kitchens arranged like home kitchens and follow what is known as the "unit plan" of work in which each girl or group of girls plans and carries out the assigned work as if in the home kitchen. Some schools have furnished rooms that can be cared for by the class and thus they are able to teach the whole round of duties necessary in housekeeping.

A local situation is often made the basis for a class study. The income of a local industrial family is budgeted. The wardrobe for the babies of a large family is used as the problem of a sewing class. The girls collect wage scales and study the possibilities of the standard of living for the various employees in the industries with which members of their family are associated. By observance of "Parents' Day" mothers and teachers are brought together to exchange ideas, thus helping to make school work of more value to the pupils.

In some schools in which no provision for courses in school has been made, the Crete plan has been tried with considerable success. The Crete plan comprehends the following:

1. Demonstrations are given to the class by women, in their homes, who are actual housekeepers.
2. Laboratory work is carried on in the student's own home.
3. A cooking contest is held in which each girl competes with at least three dishes.
4. The reading of a textbook, and one recitation a week upon it, is required.
5. The serving of a meal to the instructors and their husbands serves as a test.

To the young teacher the adaptation of home economics lessons to the needs of the community offers a problem of great difficulty. Reports indicate that these problems are being squarely faced and courageously met. Many teachers have wisely based their work on an understanding of community needs. They begin by going into the homes of the pupils in order to understand conditions. This is possible by means of social calls or upon invitation from the parents. The teacher learns from the girls what part they take in housekeeping and in the making of their own clothes. Next, it is necessary to

know something of the future life of the girls, whether or not they will go on to college and in what occupations they are apt to be engaged. This can be learned from those who know the community well. Teachers endeavor to secure information regarding local conditions from every angle that they may be sure to exert their influence in the line in which it is most needed. While acquainting themselves with the people of the community, they learn the resources of the community that they may teach the pupils to make the best use of the materials that are common to them and within the means of the average home. While visiting the schools and the homes of the community, home economics teachers have found that their work is not limited to the classroom. The following quotations suggest lines of activity to which they give their services:

The high-school home economics teacher also supervises three country districts by going out in the fall and spring to do actual teaching and furnishing outlines during the winter months when it is impossible to get out. Warm lunches are to be started in each school.

We are trying to develop community spirit by competitive bread clubs, sewing clubs, etc., among the scholars. Then we have a county fair here, which is one of the most splendid means of bringing out good work. We compete with other schools in the county in household arts, and the interest aroused has been a wonderful help in fostering the community spirit. In our cooking lessons we always consider the expediency of serving certain products to the school board, the commercial club, or a mothers' club, and in having community banquets.

We have an increasingly helpful Home and School Association, composed of parents and teachers, and ably supported and encouraged by our superintendent of schools. We have also had an extension class for mothers conducted during school hours and in the school kitchen. This course comprises lessons in bread and cake making, salads and dressings, pies, quick breads, batters, soups, meats, and some individual work in dietetics.

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